
**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council of Ashburnham with Penhurst
held on Wednesday 30th September 2020 at 7.30pm as an online virtual meeting.**

The meeting was held under the terms of the following Statutory Instrument:
SI 2020/392 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and
Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

Parish Councillors present: Cllrs Tina French, Andrew Hoad (Chairman), Ron King, Chris Sinden and Zoe O’Sullivan.

Parish Councillors absent: Cllrs Paul Spicer and Richard White.

District / County Councillors present: RDC Cllr Gary Curtis

In attendance: Brian Holdstock, Clerk to the Council
1 member of the public

1) Apologies for absence

ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field, Parish Councillors Paul Spicer and Richard White

2) Disclosures of interest

None

3) Additional agenda items

None

4) Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 29th July 2020 were circulated with the agenda. On the motion of the Chairman the minutes were adopted without amendment.

5) Open Forum

a) ESCC Cllr Kathryn Field reported in writing as follows

- i) The Covid-19 incidences in the County are low but so are testing rates.
- ii) The Government promised to refund Local Authorities for excess Covid-19 spending but so far ESCC is in deficit by several £m. Perhaps there is more money to come?
- iii) A recent press release issued by the Leader of the County Council reported that there would be no new cuts. However, the cuts already budgeted for will go ahead.

b) RDC Cllr Gary Curtis reported as follows:

- i) Speedwatch -
 - (1) on a recent check in Catsfield 44 vehicles were clocked in an hour travelling at more than 40mph in the 30mp zone,
 - (2) a black box is to be installed in Catsfield and the data captured is actionable by the police, and
 - (3) RALC are due to discuss speeding at the next meeting and there has been much interest.
- ii) Planning -
 - (1) RDC planning department is experiencing significant losses of personnel which is impacting on services, and
 - (2) despite numerous requests for information Cllr Curtis has been unable to obtain any information about the ongoing enforcement proceedings at Oak Bank Farm.

6) **Planning** (*updates or decisions in italics*)

a) **On-going applications** *Progress was noted on the following:*

RR/2019/1694/P - Brays Hill Farm House, Brays Hill, Ashburnham TN33 9NZ - Two storey extension to rear of property and first floor side extension. Internal re modelling of kitchen and bedroom. Construction of detached double garage with storage space above. Alternative to RR/2018/1400/P. *Remains undecided.*

RR/2020/996/P - Little Oak Hall, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QN - Proposed conversion and extension of existing outbuilding to form new holiday let and construction of new single garage.

Approved conditional. Item closed.

b) **New applications** *To determine the council's response*

RR/2020/1231/P - Honey Land, Honey Lane, Ashburnham, TN33 9PE - Proposed agricultural barn.

At a recent virtual meeting of councillors it was decided to oppose this application and the details have been posted to the RDC planning portal.

RR/2020/1313/P - The Stable Block, Penhurst Lane, Penhurst TN33 9QP - Change of use and conversion to create a 2 bedroom managers flat, 2 additional bedrooms and a new meeting room all for use in association with Penhurst Retreat Centre, including retention of the existing first floor holiday accommodation unit.

Members have already decided at a recent virtual meeting, which included the applicant, to support this application which remains undecided.

c) **Breaches and Enforcement** – *Note taken of the current position on the following open cases:*

ENF/107/18/ASH – Oak Bank Farm, Farthing Lane, Ashburnham RR/2012/1053/P – Breach of Condition Notices A and B served 28 Nov 2018. Notice A: “. . .storage of business use and agricultural items on the hardstanding surface without permission . . not within Oak Bank Farm” ; Notice B: “. . the hardstanding is being used for the storage of business use and agricultural items.” (permitted use is for domestic storage and parking, not for any business use.)

There is no appeal against a Breach of Condition Notice and enforcement takes place in the magistrates court. Enforcement hearings in court started but were suspended temporarily when the Coronavirus lockdown came into force. (Action RDC Cllr Curtis: to continue to request a situation report)

ENF/40/19/ASH Oak Bank Farm, Farthing Lane, Ashburnham – Unlawful extension of lawful development. *Enforcement report 30/5/19. No further information.*

(Action RDC Cllr Curtis: to request a situation report)

ENF/191/20/ASH - Buckwell Ghyll, Lakehurst Lane, Ashburnham - Breach of Appeal - using property for residential.

New breach. No reports yet received.

(Action: Clerk to confirm that Certificate of Lawful Development cannot be issued once breach notified)

d) **Appeals**

None

e) **Rother District Local Plan Update**

The Chairman reported that he is now in possession of much rich data for inclusion into the parish council's response to the consultation, but he needs more time to consolidate it.

(Action: Clerk to request a one week extension of deadline submission from 9th to 16th October 2020.)

7) Community Matters

a) Village Action Plan

Preservation of the rural character of our villages (Cllr Zoe O’Sullivan)
Still under review

Smooth and safe roads (Cllr Ron King)

Some pot holes have been reported and filled. This topic is to be highlighted at the next SLR meeting (Action: Clerk to advise highways and request information about the different methods of pot hole filling.)

Communication and involvement (Cllr Zoe O’Sullivan)

Cllr O’Sullivan reported that she had met the deadline for compliance with the Accessibility Regulations and has posted an Access Statement on the parish website.

Community and Environment (Cllr Tina French)

Cllr French is meeting with Kristina Sodomkova on Friday 2nd October for a tour of the village and its plans for a greener future including the ambition to be the first carbon neutral village in East Sussex. Kristina Sodomkova has joined RDC to deliver their new Environment Strategy.

New village hall (Cllr Richard White) *see below at 10.1*

Superfast broadband connectivity for all (Cllr Andrew Hoad)

i) The Chairman reported that he continues to attempt to invoke the new Universal Service Obligation in respect of providing him with broadband speed in excess of 30Mbps. Following the initial cost estimate of £100k he requested more detail as he is entitled to do. The second cost estimate was £249k. This would appear to be nonsense given the cost of a similar project at Brigden Hill, recently completed, which cost £44k. Further probing is on-going with the aim of getting more clarity from BT Openreach.

ii) The Clerk reported that the East Sussex rollout programme, which is now in the phase ‘Contract 3’, have announced that they will automatically add £1,000 to the value of each householder’s Gigabit voucher (the vouchers are aggregated to cover the cost of a Community Fibre Partnership).

b) Affordable Housing

Members continue to keep this topic current and are regarding the submission to the Local Plan Update (see 6. c) above) as an element of building a case for affordable housing in the village.

c) Phone box and museum

Cllr French reported that work on establishing the museum is ongoing.

8) RFO Report

a) Receipts and Payments

On the motion of the Chairman members resolved to approve the tabled schedule for the period 23 July to 23 September 2020.

b) Bank reconciliation

Members received the bank reconciliation (on file) as at 23 September 2020. Cllr French reported that she has been on line to the bank and can verify the stated balance.

c) Income and expenditure against budget

The RFO tabled a report (on file) against budget to the 23 September 2020. There are

numerous exceptional variances and all are due to the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic. Income from letting is down and community expenditure on Covid-19 hygiene materials were not budgeted for. These negative variances are more than offset by the Business Support Grant received of £10,000.

d) Earmarked Reserves

The RFO tabled a report on the movement of funds in earmarked reserves. Variances from the plan are due to the pandemic and the net effect is favourable.

e) Payments to authorise

On the motion of the Chairman members resolved to authorise the schedule of payments previously circulated and attached to these minutes. **(Action: Clerk to submit payments).**

f) External Audit sign off

The External Auditor (PKF Littlejohn) have issued the formal notice of completion of the audit. There were no issues.

g) Three Year Forecast

The council is required to review annually a three year financial forecast. In view of the pandemic members agreed that it was sensible to defer this item until November when the first draft of the annual budget will be tabled.

9) Governance

- a) No items tabled

10) Premises

a) New village hall

i) Planning and Design: the minutes of the last two meetings of the committee (New Hall Steering Group) were circulated before this meeting. Consultations with interested users on fitting out details continue.

ii) Construction: Note was taken that the cost estimates received are in more detail now indicating that the cost of the building the primary weatherproof structure but excluding all of the fitting out is likely to be some £400k.

iii) Funding: nothing new to report.

iv) Landlord and Legal: As instructed by the previous meeting, further discussions with the agents for the Ashburnham Estate were sought and a meeting was offered which took place this morning as an online virtual meeting. The offers made by the estate for changes to the lease were put in writing this afternoon.

Having been briefed by the Chairman on the detail, members were of the unanimous view that the latest changes to the lease proposal were considered to represent a substantial and generous change and underlined the Estate's support for the new hall project.

On the motion of the Chairman seconded by Cllr Sinden members resolved that the council should proceed to sign the new lease subject only to scrutiny (for the sake of good order) by a lawyer that the council will instruct.

v) Commissioning and Handover: Given the new interpretation of clause 14 of the lease it would be appropriate for the council to start thinking about the extent to which the Ashburnham & Penhurst Community Centre should be involved operationally.

b) Pavilion and Sports Field

i) Lettings – the only lettings at present are the Art Group and the cricket club.

ii) Pavilion maintenance – the recoating of the weather boarding has been delayed due to illness of the contractor appointed. It is still hoped to complete the work before the winter.

The entrance widening work remains unfinished with no information about when it might be completed.

iii) Sports Field maintenance – the cricket club are firmly in control again of the cricket field having had their gang mower sharpened and maintained.

c) Village Hall

- i) In the absence of Cllr White, the Clerk was able to report that the oil tank has been replaced and that three quarters of the cost of £2,500 was met by Ashburnham Thanksgiving Trust who made a generous offer some years ago to support maintenance by adding £3 to every £1 the village raises to maintain the hall.
- ii) Painting of the fascia boards on the dormers, postponed from last year, will be undertaken in October.

11) Highways and Byways

a) Finger posts

The Clerk reported that the planned maintenance and renewal programme has just been completed and the subsidy from ESCC is being processed.
Post number 2 (Kitchenham Road) was repaired in the workshop and post no.11 (Old Chapel House) was renewed completely. Post 9 (Farthing Lane) and post 10 (Old Thatched Lane, top of) were both refurbished in situ with post 10 being set upright again.

b) SLR meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 24th November 2020. Members agreed that it would be best if it were a virtual meeting. **(Action: Clerk to request a zoom meeting with Highways.)**

c) Street naming

The residents of Penhurst Field have been informed of a change of post code as a result of a street name change made by the local authority. There has been no consultation and Penhurst Field now has a post code unique to itself. The road name has not, in fact, changed. **(Action: Clerk to contact RDC Street Naming Officer and request an explanation.)**

d) Footpaths

The extensive repairs to Honey Lane have been warmly welcomed by the parish council whose gratitude has already been expressed to the Rights of Way team. In response to the question the team advised,
“The cost of the work was £16,944. This represents approximately 9.4 % of the expected capital budget spend of £213K on the repair of surfaces and bridges on the County's rights of way network this year.”

12) Correspondence

None

13) Information for Councillors / Future Agenda items

None

14) Dates of Next Meetings

- a) Council meetings - the dates of the meetings for the remainder of the council year are 29th January 2020, 25th March and 27th May (Annual Meeting).
Annual Assembly Thursday 23rd April 2020.

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Signed (Chair)

Date